



**ACT**  
Government

# A new service system for child protection, out of home care and support services

Listening report | Focus Groups & Written Submissions

April, May and June 2023



We wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the land and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

**Detail of:**  
***Meeting Place* by Leah Brideson**  
A representation of Canberra as a meeting place. The palette is inspired by colours of our natural environment and the textures of the land, mountains and rivers that surround this beautiful city.

# Introduction

The ACT Government is reforming children and family services to strengthen families and keep children and young people safe and connected.

This work includes implementing [Next Steps for Our Kids](#), the [Our Booris, Our Way recommendations](#), amendments to the *Children and Youth People Act 2008* as well as developing a Charter for Parents and Families and a Charter for Carers involved in Child and Youth Protection Services. The ACT Government is also seeking to support better outcomes for families at risk through the commissioning of the [Child, Youth and Family Services Program \(CYFSP\)](#).

As part of this Reform, the ACT Government is progressing a new service system to shift the investment over time to reduce the need for statutory child protection and out of home care responses by improving support for families to keep children and young people safe at home. This new service system has been developed in response to an evidence base from *A Step Up for Our Kids 2015–2020* (A Step Up) alongside research of multiple models across Australia and internationally. The new service system will drive fundamental change to how we work together—between government and non-government and between service providers. These changes will demand interoperability; the ability to collaborate and work in conjunction with one another to provide ‘joined up service delivery’ geared towards better outcomes for children, young people, families and carers.

**This Report provides a summary of the feedback from 14 focus groups hosted by CSD’s Children, Youth and Families Division during April, May and June 2023. The Report also includes a summary of feedback from the 7 written submissions received in May 2023. Responses are organised by the following themes:**

- The new service system
- Sustaining families
- Kinship care
- Foster care
- Family reconnect and aftercare
- Other

A more detailed list of focus group discussion points are included at the end of this document.

Over 200 experts across the community sector, government and people with lived and living experience contributed to the focus groups targeted for internal and external stakeholders. Feedback has been grouped to show:



Key points agreed by **all** participants



Key points agreed by **most** participants



Key points made by **some** participants



Questions asked by participants



# Focus Group Participants

- ❖ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience
- ❖ ACT Together
- ❖ Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT
- ❖ Australian Childhood Foundation
- ❖ Australian Childhood Trauma Group
- ❖ Australian Red Cross
- ❖ Barnardos Australia
- ❖ Capital Region Community Services
- ❖ CatholicCare
- ❖ Carers (Living / Lived Experience)
- ❖ Carers ACT
- ❖ Children Australia Inc (trading as OzChild)
- ❖ Children Youth and Families (CYF) staff and leadership group.
- ❖ Community Services Directorate (CSD) staff.
- ❖ Families ACT
- ❖ Focus ACT Ltd
- ❖ Key Assets – The Children’s Service Provider (Australia) Limited
- ❖ Life Without Barriers
- ❖ NAIDOC
- ❖ Relationships Australia
- ❖ The Benevolent Society
- ❖ Uniting NSW.ACT
- ❖ Woden Community Service
- ❖ Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation
- ❖ Youth Coalition of the ACT
- ❖ Zest Care Australia

# Written Submissions

Written submissions were received from:

1. Barnardos Australia.
2. Children Australia Inc (trading as OzChild).
3. Karinya House for Mothers and Babies.
4. Key Assets – The Children’s Service Provider (Australia) Limited.
5. Settlement Services International Limited.
6. The Benevolent Society.
7. Womens Legal Centre ACT.

# The new service system

Increased resourcing for more early intervention, prevention and restoration.

Families are expert in what they need. Ask the family what they need to succeed and how they can be assisted to achieve this.

Remove the possibility of adoption for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care.

An opportunity for change in practice and expectations.

A focus on early support suggests a new approach for referrals.

There is a need for joined up information sharing.



- Supported a move to multiple providers including ACCOs .... And recognise the challenges that come with multiple providers.
- Noted the benefits of moving to multiple providers, including:
  - Opportunities for service providers to specialise.
  - Opportunities for changes in practice and expectations.
  - Options for families to change providers following a conflict of interest or negative experience.
  - Wider variety of choices and options to suit different case scenarios.
- Supported building trust between CYPS, service providers, and children and families engaging with the service system. Trust was also noted as a key aspect of ensuring joined-up service delivery.



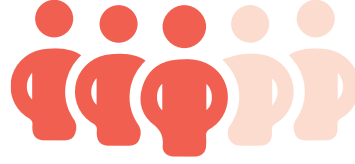
- Supported ACCOs playing a stronger role in the service system, and emphasised ACCOs as a key part of the shift to multiple providers.
- Agreed on the importance of choice... mixed support for the move to multiple service providers.
- Agreed user choice is important for children, young people and families accessing the service system. A contrary view was it may not be necessary for all services to have multiple options. Flexibility is required.
- Noted challenges of moving to multiple providers, including:
  - Inconsistencies in service delivery.
  - Service providers working against each other's interests.
  - Inefficient communication between organisations.
  - Role clarity was necessary for the new service system to work together.
  - Potential to dilute capabilities of Sector.
- Raised issues around services including barriers to accessing services and waitlists. A similar view identified shortcomings in the current service system, including long waitlists, delays in accessing services, and delays with specialist assessments, such as learning assessments and mental health assessments.
- Expressed a desire to incorporate successful systems and models from other jurisdictions; however there was an opposing view suggesting these approaches may not work in the ACT.
- Suggested a move to multiple providers may incentivise service providers to work better with carers.
- Supported a 'central hub' where CYPS and service providers could share resources around referrals, advocacy, training and support for carers.
- Identified key challenges for children, young people and families are seen as housing, shortage of foster carers and providing carers with appropriate resources. Housing for single mothers is also key.



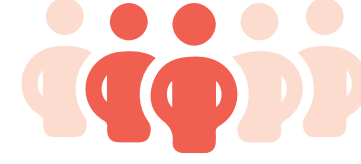
- Supported community organisations taking the lead in family/kin finding and restoration and for greater community involvement in the referral processes.
- Suggested the successful elements of A Step Up be retained—"don't throw everything out...keep what worked".
- Placed importance on ensuring a smooth transition to the new service system for providers and families already engaged with the system.
- Supported reducing funding for under-performing service providers.
- Suggested restoration is missing.
- Suggested CYPS to provide a one stop shop.
- Cautioned the reduction / loss of carer subsidies may disincentivise carers to seek adoptions and EPR.
- Recommended greater use of family group conferencing before taking emergency action.
- Suggested managing interoperability through two distinct online systems, one for clients and one for staff. The potential for increased administrative burden was also acknowledged.



- Supported early intervention and practices to divert children and young people away from statutory care.
- Called for more role clarity required between government and non-government and also increased resource allocation for early intervention and family preservation. Similarly, highlighted the importance of adequate government funding to deliver high quality services but also said that increased funding will not provide the entire solution.
- Agreed on the importance of adequate funding to implement the new service system. It was also noted that evidence-based interventions may be more costly than “business-as-usual” services. Concern was also expressed about service providers needing to do more with the same resources.
- Supported outcome based performance management...but not punitive.



- Emphasis on cultural competency, need for a cultural lens and cultural connections....and similarly, supported a greater focus on services for culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.
- Support for increased collaboration between government and non-government—intervention, workforce training and case management.
- Supported greater investment in workforce development, including recruitment, training and retention of staff.
- Supported multi-agency training for carers and staff.
- Highlighted the importance of maintaining integrity for children, young people, and their families.
- Recommended CYPS delegate parental responsibility to service providers, with mechanisms for care and accountability built in.
- Supported children and young people having an opportunity for a continuing relationship with their previous carers after being restored to birth parents.
- Supported advocating for children and young people and working with the whole family to ensure the best interests of children and young people are met.
- Requested further detail around the broad definitions to avoid confusion between organisations. For example, organisations may have different definitions of what they view as “intensive”.
- Supported a centralised referral system with a single entry-point. OneLink was cited as a successful example of a centralised referral system.
- Suggested CYPS clients and higher risk referrals should be prioritised. A contrary view was that there should be a specialised system for early intervention referrals.



- Recommended a web portal for clients to easily find targeted programs.
- Suggested a liaison team could assist case managers to find appropriate service and build relationships with service providers. An alternative suggestion was a governance group including people who cover the various service areas.
- Suggested some changes to more appropriate language. For example, “early support” could be changed to “early support and diversion” and “after care” could be changed to “after care and through care”.
- Supported multiple entry points to the system to suit the varied needs of children, young people and families.
- Expressed concern service providers may be more willing to work with children, young people and families who have less complex problems or are easier to engage with.
- Called for greater clarity in the diagram on how CYPS will prepare internally for these reforms.
- Recommended alternate care arrangements to be more closely integrated into the broader service system.





- Supported building trust between CYPS, service providers, and children and families engaging with the service system. Trust was also noted as a key aspect of ensuring joined-up service delivery. This was also expressed as trust being important between families, government and non-government....”there is a lack of trust and letting go ....
- Supported prioritising permanence for children and young people in care with kinship care being the first priority for children entering care.



- Supported the shift from statutory care to early support and prevention.
- Supported closer integration between child protection and other related service sectors, including housing, healthcare and education.
- Supported non-government organisation playing a larger role in the child protection and out of home care system, including case management, delegated parental responsibility, and family finding.
- Supported greater use of data to inform service outcomes, and some highlighted the importance of common standards for data reporting and information sharing.
- Called for restoration services being highly prioritised and provided by non-government service providers.
- Supported multi-agency training for carers and staff.
- Supported good governance and information-sharing
- Supported effective information sharing so children and families will not have to repeat their stories to multiple providers.
- Suggested funding and support need to follow the child / young person even if they go home voluntarily.



- Suggested changes in organisational culture by some participants, such as shifting towards a more inter-related view of children, young people, families, and carers.
- Noted counselling and trauma support is limited, and there was a suggestion for use of therapeutic specialists within CYPS.
- Recommended “warm referrals”, where case workers can assist families in accessing other services.
- Requested clarification on how referrals would be integrated with the Placements and Case Mix Committee.
- Suggested establishing a permanent referrals hub in 220 London Circuit.
- Recommended service providers delineate themselves and be clear about their specialised service offers.
- Noted there are limited options for in home support services for family preservation.
- Recommended more support in service agreements for data development, evaluations and monitoring.
- Suggestion for CSD to develop longer-term agreements.

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community – Key Messaging

- Our Booris, Our Way Final Report, Recommendation 26: Remove the possibility of the adoption of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are in the out of home care (OOHC) system. Same for EPR – should not be allowed to occur unless for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin as restoration is the #1 goal.
- Enshrine non-adoption into the new legislation.
- Our Booris, Our Way Final Report, Recommendation 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should be case managed by an ACCA/ACCO that is culturally competent and trusted.
- Remove the option of residential care for children under the age of 12.
- The new system must be trauma aware and healing informed.
- Kinship care is the first option as per the ATSI CPP and it should be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander kin first.
- Early intervention is key - all of the funding should go to the front end and not the tertiary end.
- Choice of service is paramount - families should be allowed to choose who case manages them (statutory authority or an ACCO). Self determination is the key to success for that family.
- Families are the expert in what they need not the Case Manager. Ask the family what they need to succeed and how they can be assisted to achieve this.
- Emphasis on the role of ACCOs in self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- User choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families aligns with Target 17 in The National Agreement on Closing the Gap..

## Gaps in services currently available in the ACT (sample of responses)

- Services for children and families with disabilities.
- In-home supports for family preservation.
- Homelessness services for younger children.
- Multicultural services, including translation.
- Programs for young people experiencing sexual abuse or displaying harmful sexual behaviour, e.g., New Street (NSW).
- In-school supports.
- Free or low-cost services for low-income families.
- Support and training for interstate carers.
- Intensive mental health services for young people.
- Mental health supports for carers.
- Housing services.



What does 'early support' mean? What about 'health', 'education', etc? The name 'child protection' is loaded.

What about additional outcomes: restoration, stability and permanency, connect to culture and community in and outside of care, improved experiences across all including in care and at home and early support—improved connection, experiences and support?

## Quotes...



Over one quarter of Australians are born overseas ... [but] we do not have accurate stats on CALD children in care”.



.....we need to invest in families at all parts of the service system.....



.....we need to address the negative perception that Kinship Care is second best to Foster Care.



...there is a lack of trust....and letting go.



....for them [young people exiting care] maintaining housing is key.

# Sustaining families

A centralised intake system for referrals.

Restoration is to occur early (and continuously).

Trauma informed and holistic care is required to divert families from statutory services.

Restore kids as soon as possible.

Have specialists / experts delivering restoration.

The Child and Family Centres are working well in the current system.





- Supported a centralised intake system for referrals—“these are families at risk so there should be centralised risk and intake...”
- Emphasised on the essential role of restoration to family and to culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Highlighted the Importance of early intervention, including for older children and young people.
- Called for holistic care to divert families from statutory services, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- Supported a greater focus on trauma-informed early interventions.
- Divided over who should deliver restoration services. One view was CYPS would be better able to assess risks and safety, whereas a contrary view was that non-government organisations would have more time and resources to dedicate to restoration than CYPS staff.



- Emphasised importance of working towards restoration as early as possible.
- Called for the broad definition for Sustaining Families to have a greater focus on a trauma informed approach.
- Supported more user choice regarding early interventions. A contrary view was children in need of support cannot be “left on hold” while their parents take time to choose a service provider.
- Suggested CYPS and non-government organisations must share the same understanding of risk and safety regarding restoration.
- Highlighted the importance of specialised expertise in restoration services.
- Recommended giving families appropriate support after restoration so that CYPS does not become involved with them again.
- Reinforced the importance of focusing on restoration throughout the entire service system.
- Noted a lack of resources for restoration of children and young people on long-term orders.



- Acknowledged potential mistakes in a centralised intake system... “NSW makes lots of mistakes and sends people to the wrong services”.
- Called for further details on the definition of cultural safety.
- Emphasised restoration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not only to the family but also to the culture.
- Advised there was a lack of perseverance from service providers attempting to engage with families.
- Suggested where case management is moved to a non-government organisation, then the organisation should have access to the same referral services as CYPS.
- Identified a current gap in the service system for ongoing family violence services, rather than just crisis services.
- Noted a lack of appropriate services for children, young people and families with multiple complex risks.
- Suggested a dedicated restoration team who can keep supporting the family for up to 2 years.
- Advised restoration and case management should be delivered by the same organisation. A contrary view was that restoration could be managed by a partnership or panel of CYPS and non-government organisations.



- Supported prioritising restoration throughout the service system, beginning as soon as a child is taken into care.

## • Quotes...



....set restoration goals early to keep case management accountable.”



....the minute a child is referred there needs to be a plan for restoration.”



....how do we best help families who need a service but choose not to engage.”



- Highlighted importance of early support programs developing a sense of belonging and identify.
- Supported services to include domestic and family violence.
- Concerned about the funding disparity between residential care and family preservation.
- Called to improve the referral processes for early supports including non-government organisations managing family preservation referrals.
- Highlighted importance for a shared understanding of assessing risk in child concern reports.



- Called for restoration services which respond to the developmental challenges of children in care, including attachment disruption and loss of identity.
- Emphasised safety as an important aspect of restoration.
- Called for improved prenatal and antenatal services for women as a way to reduce the likelihood of their children going into out-of-home-care.
- Recommended for the referral pathway to be codesigned with service providers.
- Supported establishing eligibility criteria for *Sustaining Families* services to direct the limited resources to families who need them most. A contrary view was universal services for early support could be less stigmatising than targeted services. It was also noted Principle 1 of Safe and Supported, requires child and young people to have access to both targeted and universal services.
- Highlighted importance of empowering children and young people to take an active role in their own support, such as through helping families develop their own skills and knowledge and maintain their own support networks.
- Called for interagency panels, forums and practice communities to ensure continuity of support for families already engaged with the system.
- Recommended common frameworks for risk assessment, safety planning, restoration and permanency to ensure interoperability across the service system.



**How will Sustaining Families be integrated with services already offered by CSD?**

# Kinship care

Kinship care must be the first option for children entering care... and prioritised over other placement types.

Listen to carers and provide them appropriate supports and training.

Cultural competence is a key aspect of kinship care.

Intensive support packages are required for carers to better support / maintain placements.

Consider generational trauma of birth parents and support them to develop their parenting skills.

We need specialist services to connect children to their culture and language.



- Supported kinship care as the preferred placement type for all children and young people. The broad definition of kinship care needs to be more explicit about kinship care being the first option for a child entering care....this shows commitment and aligns with legislation
- Supported prioritising permanence for children and young people in care.
- Emphasised importance of listening to carers and providing them with appropriate support e.g. a carer support package (respite, informal access to therapies for carers and capacity building).
- Supported transferring responsibilities and decision-making power to non-government organisations... power in permanency planning is required, the professional care model should be delivered by the sector.....



- Emphasised importance of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle to the service definition.
- Agreed for non-government organisations to hold greater case-management decision-making power, including delegated parental responsibility.
- Highlighted the need for continuous family finding, even for children and young people on long-term orders.
- Called for increased funds to recruit and support carers.
- Supported closer collaboration between CYPS and non-government organisations regarding Kinship Care, and emphasised the importance of trust, transparency and mutual respect.
- Called for a greater focus on supporting carers in the broad definition.



- Emphasised cultural competence as a key aspect of kinship care.... We need a cultural lens for kinship case management.... Cultural competency needs to build cultural connections while working towards an ACCO....
- Recommended addressing the negative perception that Kinship Care is “second best” to Foster Care.
- Suggested restoration be a placement package, rather than a support package, and be delivered by the same service providers that deliver Kinship Care.
- Raised concern for the limited availability of training for carers especially a lack of tailored training for experienced carers.



It is important to include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle in the kinship care service definition.”



“Address the negative perception that kinship care is second best to foster care.”





- Recommended the introduction of a clear hierarchy of permanency goals: restoration, kinship care, foster care, permanency, and adoption.
- Recommended better supports for kinship and foster carers, including psychological and emotional support, advocacy, system navigation, and better training. There was also a suggestion for ongoing carer support.



- Supported transferring case management of foster care to the non-government sector.
- Acknowledged the challenges of recruiting and retaining foster carers.



- Advised culturally and linguistically diverse children in out-of-home care need specialised services to help connect with their culture and language.
- Recommended greater support for birth parents to help them develop their parenting skills and enable safe restoration, and that these supports should consider inter-generational trauma. It was noted that birth parents can have difficulty navigating the service system.
- Suggested the Kinship Assessment Team to take on a coordination and system navigation role.
- Noted a difference in the definitions of “kin” between CYPS and Our Booris Our Way.
- Recommended reducing barriers to contact.
- Suggested ACCOs could provide kinship care services, family finding, and restoration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
- Emphasised supporting children and young people in out-of-home-care to maintain a strong connection to their culture, including ethnic background, language, and religion.
- Highlighted the importance of wraparound care for children and young people with complex needs.

# Foster care

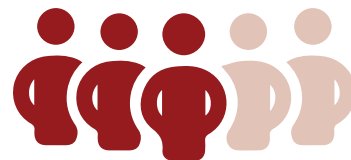
Greater support is required for continual family finding and restoration for children and young people in foster care.

Share resources to train carers across all non-government organisations.

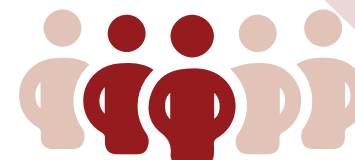
Clarify roles between government and non-government to reduce duplication.



- Supported transferring case management to non-government organisations.....In NSW, non-government organisations do the majority of court work....
- Highlighted need for greater support for 'continual' family finding and restoration for children and young people in foster care.
- Called for more support and training for carers ...share resources to train carers across all non-government organisations, foster carers as a support mechanism for kinship care.
- Emphasised the importance of foster carers feeling valued and respected.
- Highlighted need for increased trust and information sharing between organisations.
- Supported variable funding for carers according to the child or young person's needs.
- Recommended flexible options for shared care between residential and kinship care.
- Noted the absence of cultural and linguistic diversity in the service definition.
- Recommended joint training of CYF and service provider staff.



- Stressed importance of role clarity between government and non-government to reduce duplication.



- Emphasised need to intervene early in children's lives.
- Recommended community respite options for older teenagers.



Community respite options are available for older teenagers.”



There is a need for increased trust and information sharing between organisations.”

# Family reconnect and aftercare

After care should be opt out rather than opt in.

Access to housing and disability health services is critical for young people leaving care.

Services need to be flexible to cater for individual differences in young people's needs.

Crisis Calling Service and a Mediation Service.

It is important to be able to provide this support to the kids that need it.

Need for multiple providers in this space to meet diverse needs.





- Highlighted joint work should not be duplicated work – clear roles and responsibilities are required.
- Access to housing was seen by all participants as critical for young people leaving care....and also access to disability and health service.
- Emphasised need for flexibility to cater for individual differences in young people's needs (e.g., different levels of independence after age 18).
- Emphasised the importance of using positive language to describe models and services, and of avoiding stigmatising words.
- Supported extending the provision of care from 18 to 21 years old. However there were also concerns about a lack of funding and resources to extend the provision of care.



- Expressed support for After Care to be opt-out rather than opt-in.
- Emphasised the importance of helping young people navigate services as they transition out of care....advocacy and service navigation are seen as having an important role.
- Highlighted the importance of family reconnection at every stage of the service system.
- Recommended a continuation of carer allowances so that carers can “keep the door open” for young people after the age of 18, just like parents do.
- Recommended family reconnection be part of case management so that families don't have to repeat their stories.
- Suggested a “crisis calling” service . . .



- Expressed concern that aftercare services would not integrate well with other services that cut off at age 18, including healthcare and medication subsidies.
- Supported an approach that considers the individual circumstance of each young person, rather than the same “box-ticking” approach for all young people.
- Recommended case-workers and carers should jointly discuss after care services before contacting the young person.
- Placed importance on after care being provided by someone who knows the young person, e.g., the case-worker could take on a mentorship role. A contrary view was that young people should have the choice to receive after care services from a different service provider to their out-of-home-car provider.
- Suggested the CREATE Foundation may provide after care services because young people are already familiar with CREATE's other youth programs and CREATE already understands the out-of-home-care system.



There needs to be family reconnection at every stage of the service system.



Young people need help navigating services as they transition out of care.



- Noted importance of stable and secure placements, positive relationships with family, and adequate resource, for young people to successfully transition to independence.



- Expressed concern that many other youth services will still cut-off when the young person turns 18 years old.
- Were divided over whether after care services should be delivered by CYPS or by service providers. One view was that CYPS would be best placed to provide after care, whereas a contrary view that CYPS' resources should be targeted towards children at risk of abuse and neglect instead.
- Called for children and young people to begin reconnecting with their families as soon as they enter care.



- Suggested a mediation service for young people who are aged 16 years or older and their parents.
- Requested further clarification regarding the extended provision of care.
- Participants suggested packages for young people aged 16 years and older including Centrelink, Housing and after care services.
- Suggested services be more closely aligned with mainstream adult services such as housing and vocational training.
- Suggested after care programs support young people's resilience and stability.
- Noted housing support as a key aspect of after care.
- Suggested innovative models such as lead tenant agreements help young people transition to independence.
- Called for inter-agency referral processes to support user choice for young people transitioning out of care.

# Other

Aboriginal oversight required for children in residential care.

Adoptions and EPR should not be seen, funded, or delivered separately.

Brokerage needs to be built into placement packages.

Place adoptions and EPR in a permanency hierarchy.

Funded agencies need to see Youth Justice as part of their space.

Sibling groups missing from Alternate Care definition.

## Placements and Case Mix Committee

- Called for further clarification around the Committee, including where it sits in relation to the performance management framework and other broader governance frameworks.
- Emphasised need for Aboriginal oversight of children in Therapeutic Residential Care.
- Recommended an independent oversight panel to monitor permanency goals.
- Recommended flexible options for shared care between residential and kinship care.

## Adoptions and EPR

- Noted kinship carers may be reluctant to seek EPR due to the reduction in financial support.
- Noted the absence of cultural and linguistic diversity in the service definition.
- Recommended joint training of CYF and service provider staff.
- Suggested adoption and EPR services should sit with the non-government sector.
- Suggested a “dip in, dip out” model where children and young people subject to adoption or EPR orders could be assigned a case worker when they need extra support.
- Supported adoptions and EPR being part of a continuum of permanency services, and “should not be seen, funded, or delivered separately”.
- Recommended updating legislation to place adoptions and EPR in a permanency hierarchy.
- Requested further details regarding the broad definition of permanent care.

## Brokerage

- Called for brokerage services to be built into the service and placement packages, rather than being funded separately. Others expressed support for brokerage care being built into the leaving care plan; others suggested brokerage be part of the care planning process.
- Highlighted the importance of young people being able to make their own decisions around brokerage services.
- Recommended brokerage services could also help young people navigate alternative funding sources, such as no-interest loans schemes and educational grants.
- Suggested carers could directly offer items such as fridges and washing machines to young people instead of always offering money.
- Suggested non-government sector could deliver brokerage services more efficiently than CYPS.



## Youth Justice

- Noted Youth Justice is missing from the service system diagram.
- Emphasised young people leaving Youth Justice require ongoing support, including accommodation. There was also concern about waitlists for young people on Youth Justice Orders.
- Recommended Youth Justice should be integrated more closely with residential care and Sustaining Families programs.
- Requested more specific details regarding alternative care for Youth Justice.
- Advised funded agencies to see Youth Justice clients as part of their jurisdiction, and give those clients the same levels of service their other clients.

## Alternate Care

- Recommended a service for young people who are not eligible for residential care but still need some support in semi-independent living.
- Noticed placements for sibling groups was missing from the information provided.
- Suggested it was very hard to get foster care for sibling's groups especially for older siblings with a younger sibling, and we also cannot put them into residential care, as not part of their scope.

## Professional Care Model

- Recommended NGOs deliver the Professional Care Model.
- Noted “professional” may not be most appropriate term to use – “professional is problematic as we expect all carers to be professional”.
- Supported a Professional Care Model that is outcome-focused and uses evidence-based tools.
- Supported the model.
- Called for changes to employment and taxation legislation to better support professional carers.
- Viewed as an option for children and young people with needs that are too complex for foster families.
- Suggested positional professional care as a “step-down from residential care and a transition to foster care or independence”.
- Requested clarification around the details and purpose of the professional care model but expressed support for paying carers “at a rate equivalent to a living wage”.
- Supported professional foster care to take a trauma-informed response to children and young people.
- Suggested professional foster care placements be “wrapped around” by a broader care team.

## Performance Management Framework

- Supported the proposed system Wide PMF, positivity towards a greater focus on outcomes.
- Agreed on the importance of accurate and relevant data collection and reporting towards outcomes.
- Suggested embedding standards for data reporting into the PMF so outcomes are measured consistently in the long-term.
- Recommended a payment-by-result approach be built into the PMF.
- Called for the PMF to be co-designed with service providers.
- Highlighted the importance of transparency.
- Suggested cultural change within the government may be necessary to successfully implement the PMF.

## Sourcing and Procurement Strategy

- Recommended the number of providers and organisational viability would be determined by the sector through the tendering process, including the number of responses and the capacity of tendering organisations.
- Noted the benefits of moving to multiple services providers include user choice, better advocacy, and more opportunities for service providers to specialise. Similarly, one service provider highlighted the importance of matching children, young people and families to the specialised skills of the various service providers. A contrary view was that having a smaller number of providers could reduce costs through economies of scale.
- Identified staff recruitment, effective family referrals, risk management, and a commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as key challenges for transitioning into the various service packages.
- Supported allocating work above base to high performing service providers.

“It is imperative that the PMF be open, transparent and have regular reporting, including live data as required.”

## Other Jurisdictions – processes, models and programs referenced by participants and written submissions

- Family and Child Connection (QLD & NSW).
- SafeCare (multiple).
- Functional Family Therapy (VIC).
- Putting Families First (VIC).
- Rent Choice Youth (NSW).
- Multisystemic Therapy (multiple).
- Functional Family Therapy (multiple).
- Treatment Foster Care Oregon (multiple).
- National Incident Management System (USA).
- Prevention and Strengthening Families (VIC).
- Early Years Services (VIC).
- Take Two.
- Premier's Youth Initiative.
- Orange Door.
- Starlight Initiative.
- Placement and Support Packages Panel (South Australia).
- Bungee Youth Resilience Program (ACT).
- Family Connect and Support (NSW).
- Restoration and Permanency Programs (NSW).
- Family Preservation and Reunification (VIC).
- Keeping Foster & Kinship Parents Supported and Trained (multiple).
- Mockingbird Family Model.
- Aboriginal Children's Forum (VIC).
- Multicultural Child and Family Program (NSW).
- Multicultural Foster Care Program (VIC).
- National Community Hub (NSW, QLD).
- Our Place (VIC).
- Early Help Family Services (VIC).
- Enhanced Care Program (VIC).
- Specialised Fostering Program (SA).
- Goodstart Early Learning Syndicate (multiple).
- ANZ Money Business Program.
- Doveton Place "Our Place" Model.
- Turning into Teens.
- Child Protector Navigator (VIC).

## Other Jurisdictions | Processes, models and programs referenced in the focus groups and / or written submissions

- Family and Child Connection (QLD).
- Family Connect and Support (NSW).
- SafeCare (multiple).
- Functional Family Therapy (VIC).
- Putting Families First (VIC).
- Rent Choice Youth (NSW).
- Multisystemic Therapy (multiple).
- Functional Family Therapy (multiple).
- Treatment Foster Care Oregon (multiple).
- National Incident Management System (USA).
- Prevention and Strengthening Families (VIC).
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- Our Place (VIC).
- Early Help Family Services (VIC).
- Enhanced Care Program (VIC).
- Specialised Fostering Program (SA).
- Goodstart Early Learning Syndicate (multiple).

# Appendix — What we asked

## The new service system

1. What key operating changes must happen to the current ACT system to enable the shift from child protection and out of home care to earlier support and diversion?
2. What has been the experience of similar change efforts in the ACT and other jurisdictions? What worked? What could have been done better?
3. What are your views about the change to funding arrangements? Apart from increased funding, what changes do you feel are required to ensure success of the service system?
4. What are your views about the proposed Performance Management Framework?
5. What does User Choice mean in this context?
6. How do we achieve joined up service delivery in an environment of scarce resources?
7. What role should government (including CYPS) and non-government partners take in the delivery of statutory and non-statutory services?

## Sustaining families

1. Is the broad definition appropriate? What about the elements, any gaps?
2. How would referrals work? Would the current approach (all referrals are managed by CYPS) continue or would there need to be a new approach? What role would government (including CYPS) and non-government play?
3. What support is available to build capability in ACT organisations to provide Culturally Safe practices?
4. Would eligibility criteria be used to access services? What might this look like?
5. Would there be priority access to the services for families in statutory care with the view of restoring children and young people back to families where it is safe to do so?
6. What does restoration mean and who is best placed to deliver restoration?
7. How would case management work?
8. What could innovative models and responses for this service package look like?
9. How can continuity of support for children, young people and families be facilitated when they are already engaged with services?
10. Where are the opportunities for joint work between government and non-government?

# Appendix — What we asked

## Kinship care

1. Is the broad definition appropriate? What about the elements, any gaps?
2. What are your views around how the Adoption / EPR program including permanency planning should be delivered in the ACT?
3. What are your views about the Placements and Case Mix Committee?
4. What are your views about the Professional Care Model? Who should deliver the Model and how should it be delivered?
5. How would case management work for the various placement services packages?
6. What would innovative models and responses for these service packages look like?
7. Where are the opportunities for joint work between government and non-government?

## Foster care

1. Is the broad definition appropriate? What about the elements, any gaps?
2. What are your views around how the Adoption / EPR program including permanency planning should be delivered in the ACT?
3. What are your views about the Placements and Case Mix Committee?
4. What are your views about the Professional Care Model? Who should deliver the Model and how should it be delivered?
5. How would case management work for the various placement services packages?
6. What would innovative models and responses for these service packages look like?
7. Where are the opportunities for joint work between government and non-government?

## Family reconnect and aftercare

1. Is the broad definition appropriate? What about the elements, any gaps?
2. What are your views around the provision of extended care for 18 to 21 year olds?
3. What could innovative models and responses for these service packages look like?
4. Where are the opportunities for joint work between government and non-government?



# Appendix — What we asked

## Other support services

1. Is the broad definition appropriate? What about the elements, any gaps?
2. What are your views around the management of brokerage services?
3. What would innovative models and responses for these service packages look like?
4. Where are the opportunities for joint work between government and non-government?
5. How should the system navigation and interoperability be managed?

## Sourcing and procurement strategy

1. What do you envisage as the challenges with multiple providers and services able to be expanded over time, and how could these best be managed?
2. How does CSD determine the appropriate number of providers for each of the service packages?
3. How does CSD determine organisational viability when multiple providers are involved? Would this involve a base allocation equally to the multiple providers?
4. How does CSD allocate work above the base? For example, would the volume of services be based on performance to incentivise high delivery standards where high performing providers are rewarded with higher volumes of services?
5. What are the key challenges around transitioning in / out of the various service packages?

# Appendix — What we asked

## CYF Staff Face-to-Face Sessions

1. Are the broad definitions appropriate? What about the elements, any gaps?
2. Are the right terms/language used? Are child, young people and families held at the centre?
3. What does user choice mean, and it is important to people?
4. How would referrals work?
5. What gaps do you see in services currently available in the ACT?
6. What does restoration mean and who is best placed to deliver restoration services?
7. How should the system navigation and interoperability be managed?
8. What are your biggest frustrations when accessing services for children, young people, families, and carers you work with? What works well?
9. What are your views around how the Adoption/EPR program including permanency planning should be delivered in the ACT?
10. What are your views around the provision of extended care for 18-to-21-year-olds?

## CYF Staff Online Session

1. One main change to the system is going from single to multiple providers. What are the positives and negatives for multiple service providers?
2. Is user choice important?
3. How would referrals work? Would the current approach (all referrals managed by CYPS) continue or would there need to be a new approach?
4. How should the system navigation and interoperability be managed?
5. What are your biggest frustrations when accessing services for the children, young people, families, and carers you work with?
6. What works well in services currently available in the ACT?
7. What gaps do you see in services currently available in the ACT?
8. What does restoration mean and who is best placed to deliver restoration services?
9. What are your views around how the Adoption / EPR program including permanency planning should be delivered in the ACT?

## CYF Leadership Group

1. What observations do you have about the draft service system?
  - Is the language / terms appropriate?
  - Are there gaps / elements missing?
  - How should Youth Justice be included / incorporated in the service system?
2. What kind of business / services does Government (CYPS, etc) provide in the future?
3. The proposed service system is about services working together, how can we make it more joined up? What does joined up service delivery look like for you, the service user?
4. What does service navigation look like? What would help families to navigate the services and processes in the system? Who does it?

# Thank you and next steps

**The Next Steps project team would like to thank all the people who participated in the focus groups and gave their time, experiences and ideas outlined in this Listening Report.**

**This Listening Report will be used to:**

- **Finalise the new service system and arrangements.**
- **Inform implementation of the new service system and arrangements.**
- **Inform the Approach to Market for the procurement of services.**